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AUTHOR Wienke, Jon W.
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ABSTRACT

Noting that American elementary schools over the years have emphasized reading to the detriment of writing, a study examined the efficacy of a writing program that places the student and the teacher in direct contact with the writing process by (1) requiring daily student writing and suggesting the teacher frequently write with the students, (2) providing writing models through the process of spelling dictation, and (3) teaching the students proofreading and editing skills and placing the students in situations that required use of these skills. Since the emphasis throughout the program was to increase the time that students and teachers spent on the writing task, a daily free writing period was the keystone. In the beginning, the writing period was about five minutes in length, but it was gradually lengthened to about twenty minutes. A quasiexperimental-control design was used to evaluate the effectiveness of the writing program on sixth grade students. The data indicated that while both experimental and control groups showed gains in writing scores from the beginning to the end of the school year, the treatment groups showed significantly more gains. (Appendixes include a list of proofreading symbols and a list of writing topics.) (HOD)

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STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS

by

Jon W. Wienke

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ABSTRACT

American elementary schools over the years have emphasized reading to the detriment of writing. Additionally, the instruction in these schools which has been thought to be instruction in writing really has been heavily grammar oriented.

This study examines the efficacy of placing the student and the teacher in direct contact with the writing process by:

- Requiring daily student writing and suggesting the teacher frequently write with students
- Providing writing models through the process of spelling dictation
- Teaching the students proofreading and editing skills and placing the students in situations which require use of these skills

Since writing is primarily a skill, the emphasis throughout is to increase the time that students and teachers spend on the task of writing.

Adopting the strategies delineated in this study can return writing to its rightful place in the curriculum and help reverse the trend toward functional illiteracy among American citizens.

SECTION I

GENERAL PROBLEM AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Contemporary media - both popular and professional - are full of criticisms of the American educational system's inability to produce students who can write well. The National Assessment of Educational Progress in its Update on Education (1975) stated:

> At age 9, competence in writing is probably best described by the word "limited." Nine-year-olds revealed limited vocabularies, restricted skill in sentence construction and incomplete understanding of the conventions of written English. At age 13, lower ability children simply recorded speech patterns when they were asked to write - with little understanding of conventions; upper ability students had internalized the conventions but seldom developed an idea. About half the 17-year-olds had some command of the basics of written English, but they seldom went beyond the basics: they produced simple sentences, using primarily common words and expressed only simple ideas. At the adult level, almost a third refused even to write. Of those who wrote, many exhibited severe limitations in every area. Even high-quality papers showed limited sentence structure, punctuation and other elements.[1]

Experienced educators themselves are aware of the problem. The Superintendent of Schools in Rocky Hill, Connecticut, wrote:

> Many people, including educators, are alarmed at the unfortunate and tragic incapacity of our nation's young people to manipulate the English language with precision, clarity, and color. . . . the problem seems to have deteriorated to the calamitous perigee at which it currently sits.[2]

Reader's Digest, Time, and other popular publications have displayed large print block titles proclaiming a lack of ability,

aversion, and disinclination of Americans to write. An article in Family Circle led off with this statement:

> 13 percent of America's 17-year-olds are functionally illiterate; this means they cannot read - or write - well enough to function at a minimal level in society. You've already heard that Johnny can't read, but in fact, of the three R's writing is the one that gets the least attention in the schools, and the writing of American children shows it. Far too many cannot spell, cannot punctuate a sentence properly, cannot write coherent, understandable prose.[3]

Vance Packard wrote:

> A broad and worrisome trend in America is . . . the general low state of literacy and ability to write clearly among younger and older people alike. And this at a time when the complexity of our institutions calls for ever-higher literacy just to function effectively. We must cope with insurance and employment forms, applications for credit, auto-licensing forms - and so on and on. If we can't, we are what are known as "functional illiterates."[4]

One would think that in view of these kinds of statements, researchers would be beating the bushes to find solutions. But the fact is that research on writing at the elementary school level is not as prominent as one would expect. According to Graves' studies (1980) "only 156 studies on writing in the elementary grades, or an average of six annually, have been done in the United States in the last twenty-five years."[5] The reason for this is that strong emphasis has been placed on reading in American elementary schools. There have been cost comparisons done on reading and writing. Graves reported on the results of one study (1980): "For every $3000 spent on children's ability to receive information $1.00 was spent on their power to send it in writing."[6] The National Institute of Education (1976) did not even include writing as a basic skills

category in its analysis of research. Writing was not considered to be a necessary skill "for adequate functioning in society."[7] This omission, incredible as it is at face value, takes on greater significance when viewed in light of William Glasser's statement in Schools Without Failure seven years before:

> I believe, and most educators agree, that in elementary school skills are far more important than knowledge. Although knowledge is of course a companion to the skill of reading, it is the skills themselves, especially the communicative skills, reading, writing, and speaking, that are of prime importance. It is my contention that the first eight grades of school should be devoted to gaining proficiency in these skills . . . . Reading is the most important skill for future academic success, but for success in life generally, speaking and writing are perhaps more important.[8]

It logically follows from the foregoing that there is little emphasis on writing in elementary education today. Certainly there are causes and reasons for this lack of emphasis. In the search to identify them it will be helpful to consider some of the salient causes which relate directly to the school setting.

1. Many elementary school teachers lack training in the techniques of teaching writing.

> As attention to writing skills increases, it has become apparent that many teachers are poorly prepared to teach writing.
>
> Teacher education programs often include little on the teaching of writing. Graves (1977) reported the results of a 1976 random survey of teacher education programs at 36 state universities in which it was found that "169 courses were offered in reading, thirty in children's literature, twenty-one in language arts, and only two on the teaching of writing."[9]
>
> . . . there are in the United States very few teacher-training institutions which have intensive and frequent composing as an organic part of the curriculum for young and for experienced teachers . . . .[10]

Teachers are required to take a myriad of methods courses to obtain certification by the state. They take art methods, math methods, reading methods, etc. Rarely, however, are writing methods courses offered, and almost never are they a requirement in teacher education programs. Time went further than to merely criticize poor teacher preparation in the methods of teaching. Dan Alexander in "Help! Teacher Can't Teach!" was quoted as saying:

> I was shocked. I could not believe we had teachers who could not write a grammatically correct sentence. I took the complaints down to the superintendent and what shocked me worse was that he wasn't shocked.[11]

A few inroads have been made into this problem. The Bay Area Writing Project and the Vermont Writing Program have served to draw attention to and improve the writing of teachers and through this to give teachers insights into the composing process of their students.

2. Many elementary school teachers do not require that their students write.

Reading is emphasized in the typical elementary classroom. Generally it is the first subject taught in the school day, and it is the one to which the largest percentage of time is devoted.

Since writing is the second "R", one would probably expect that it receives the second largest percentage of time. This is not the case. In fact, frequently the place of writing in the curriculum is questioned. Shanahan found:

> . . . considerable confusion exists about the place of writing in the curriculum. Teachers often had difficulty in deciding whether the "language arts" they were required to teach include writing instruction. One teacher confided, "The language arts book we use includes some writing, so I guess I'm required to teach it . . . . Yes, I'm required to teach writing."[12]

Spelling, handwriting, and language or English are also taught under the guise of teaching writing. These rather artificial classifications have been initiated to divide learning into individual teachable pieces. However, the fragmenting does not stop here. Each of these classifications is further fragmented. For example, a typical intermediate language textbook will teach grammar; included in the study of grammar will be the study of affixes; part of the study of affixes will be the study of suffixes; and the study of suffixes will consider adjective-forming suffixes, noun-forming suffixes, etc. The end result is that, for a particular day, a student's study of language (including writing) could consist of learning what noun-forming suffixes are and then adding suffixes of this type to each of ten words and writing ten new words. The bottom line is that the student has actually written only ten words in language class that day.

A typical intermediate language textbook is loaded with lessons of this type. The general procedure is that the teacher presents the lesson, there is a short discussion, and the students do the activities - writing a list of words or rewriting a group of sentences at best, and drawing a line around, under, or to the correct answer at worst.

Roughly, in a group of seven lessons in a language textbook, one will require writing of an extended nature. Graves (1977) stated: ". . . only 10 to 15 percent of language arts textbooks are devoted to writing."[13] Shanahan (1979) reported that the amount of time spent on writing instruction based on teacher estimates varied.

The mean amount of time spent on writing activities per week was 62 minutes; the median amount of time spent on writing instruction per week was 15-30 minutes 3 days a week, and the range of times reported by teachers was 0 minutes per week (in a first grade) to 45-60 minutes per day (in a second grade). [14]

Since there is a difference in the structure of knowledge, it is productive to examine how writing differs from other subjects taught. Writing, though requiring some previous knowledge, is primarily a skill vis-a-vis the study of a subject such as history which is made up of information that a student either knows or does not know. And when practicing a skill, time on task is a critical variable.[15] The analogy is frequently drawn of an athletic coach trying to produce a winning team by telling the players how to play, assigning lessons out of a textbook, and then giving the players a test. In reality, the team needs practice. Writers do too. Neuleib put it this way:

> How many teachers, parents, and administrators would be content to allow our students to pass physical education or typing or band by taking a multiple-choice test on the rules of swimming or business letters or musical notes? Yet in many ways this absurdity is exactly the one that we allow to happen in our writing classes. Students learned grammar rules, took spelling tests, read stories, took multiple-choice tests on literature, gave speeches, made movies. In short, they did everything but write.[16]

Graves, writing in Language Arts (1978), summed it up this way:

> So often our preoccupation with handwriting, grammar exercises, language arts activities in spelling books are all preliminaries, avoidances, for an event that never occurs, writing. We have lulled ourselves into the belief that for all our activity, writing is actually in full flower and practice. It isn't.
>
> Writing is extolled, worried over, cited as a national priority, but seldom practiced. The problem

> with writing is not poor spelling, punctuation, grammar, and handwriting. The problem with writing is no writing.[17]

If part of the problem is too little writing, then part of the solution is more writing. Packard (1974), Wheeler (1979), McPherson (1977), Hillerich (1977), Fader and McNeil (1968), Lokke and Wykoff (1948), Graves (1978), and Shanahan (1979) all agree that students should write more. But there must be a cautionary note added here. Several studies, notably Hays (1962) and Arnold (1964), concluded that writing by itself does not teach writing: a teacher needs to do more than merely increase the number of minutes per day which the students spend writing. Improvement in writing is not related solely to the frequency of writing,[18] and frequent practice in writing alone does not result in improvement nor is intensive evaluation more effective than moderate evaluation.[19] Increases in writing time have to be coupled with bona fide writing instruction - not grammar instruction - on an individual and group basis. Examples of such writing instruction include, but are not limited to, such topics as capitalization, punctuation, paragraphing, etc. which are discussed in more detail in Section II.

3. Many elementary school teachers do not themselves write nor do they write with their students.

As noted earlier, when a group of adults was asked to write for the National Assessment of Educational Progress, almost a third refused.[20] Many teachers do not write either. Graves (1978) reported:

> Teachers report that they do not write because they don't like writing, feel they are poor writers, do not have time to write because of teaching demands, or do not believe it necessary to practice writing in order to teach it.[21]

Emig (1971) wrote:

> . . . many teachers of composition, at least below the college level, themselves do not write. They have no recent, direct experience of a process they purport to present to others.[22]

Rather than being a separate concern, this situation is closely associated with the aforementioned statements that elementary school teachers have not had significant amounts of writing training and do not require that their students write. Teachers tend to teach that for which they have been trained and as a result feel comfortable and confident in teaching. Confidence is the key to doing - and doing well.

Infrequently do teachers teach well that which they do not know well, have confidence in doing, and retain that confidence by practicing. Art teachers are frequently practitioners; wrestling coaches frequently were wrestlers and many keep their skills sharp by wrestling. Generally, a coach or fine arts teacher who, at least periodically, demonstrates her/his skill to the students is more respected as a <u>teacher</u>.

The same ideas apply to the skill of writing. A teacher of writing needs to be one who her/himself writes. When a teacher writes, several things happen, three of which relate directly to the problem areas previously described:

- <u>The teacher becomes a model</u>. Why is this important?

> Writing models . . . do not exist for most children, in school or out. Children may see adults read and certainly hear them speak, but rarely do they see adults write. And it is even less likely that they will actually observe how an adult composes. We know of the importance of models in reading and speaking. Although we have

> no good research data on how adult models affect children's writing, clear inferences can be drawn as warnings about the future of writing in America. Children begin to lose their natural urge to put their messages down in writing as soon as they begin to have a sense of audience, at eight or nine years of age. It is at this point that adults begin to have a strong influence as models. It is also the time when teachers' comments on children's papers begin to have an impact. This impact affects children for the rest of their lives.[23]

Just at the time children need an adult as a model for writing, the student is observing a teacher teaching grammar and how to fill in blanks, underline, and encircle in workbooks. And Sherwin (1969), Wheeler (1979), and Fader and McNeil (1972) all agree with Braddock et al. (1963) that:

> . . . the conclusion can be stated in strong and unqualified terms: the teaching of formal grammar has a negligible or, because it usually displaces some instruction and practice in actual composition, even a harmful effect on the improvement of writing.[24]

Teachers should avoid teaching grammar when they actually intend to teach writing.

- When teachers write with their students, they show that they value writing - that it is a worthwhile venture. It establishes a climate which accentuates the teacher's verbal testament about the importance of writing and tells the students that writing is serious business and that they should take it as such. Maya (1979), Cutter (1979), and Andreasen et al. (1980) all agree that it is important, at least occasionally, that the teacher write at the same time that the students write and thus give some physical evidence that writing is something which adults do and which adults value.

- The teacher gains insights about the composing process.

Murray put it this way:

> The writing teacher who writes . . . may be able to enter into the process of individual exploration with the student. The teacher who is experiencing important and surprising discoveries through language is likely to share and support each student's individual exploration of the world. The discoveries they make together is the energizing force which drives the writing course forward.[25]

And Kohl added:

> I often write along with my students. It gives me an opportunity to explore forms that I don't often use in my own writing and to gain insight into some of the writing problems my students face.[26]

Teachers, by asking their students to write, have asked them to take a chance - to put themselves at risk. When a teacher writes and displays her/his writing for the students to see, s/he is showing that s/he knows of the problems and the hard work which go into composing and that the risk is worth taking.

Definitions

Before going on to a description of the writing program, it will be helpful to establish some operational definitions. These definitions apply to terms which will be used frequently in the remainder of the report and some are subject to variability of definition.

The elementary school teacher is one who is certified by the state to teach elementary school students - students of grades 1-8. Writing refers to the composition process. It does not refer to penmanship or handwriting. Writing sample is used to indicate a piece of writing which a student has written under test conditions. The writing sample is also called the "free writing exercise," "essay

test," and "a direct measure of writing."

A textbook is a book produced for the purpose of aiding in teaching a course of study in a school. A workbook is usually a paper bound booklet which has exercises in it which directly relate to the textbook. Workbooks are also known as "activity books."

A pretest is a test which a student takes before beginning a course of study and a posttest is a test which a student takes when s/he has finished the course of study.

Terms which apply to scoring writing samples basically fall into one of two categories: holistic scoring and analytical scoring. Holistic scoring requires that evaluators assign a numerical score to an essay on the basis of the overall impression of the quality of writing. This method is also called "quick impression marking" and "general impression marking." Analytical scoring requires that the evaluator score each essay on the basis of any number of specific qualities such as mechanics, logical organization, creativity, fluency, etc. A final or overall score is often derived from an average of the individual scores.

SECTION II

THE WRITING PROGRAM

John Gowan, an expert in teaching the gifted and talented, stated that "[The gifted] should be required to write, . . . should be expected to write."[27] One could interpret this comment to mean that the gifted should believe that writing is a normal, everyday thing to do. People write in the course of their everyday affairs. This writer agrees with this comment, but would not restrict the comment to the gifted. All students should expect and be expected to write on a daily basis, and have the attitude that it is an everyday activity that people do.

This writer has implemented the philosophy stated above by instituting a writing program composed of required daily writing, instruction in proofreading, replacing spelling with dictation, and individual and group instruction in punctuation, usage, etc.

The writing program is based on the assumptions that people learn by doing and learning is increased through increased time on task. The students are required to write daily for an extended period and gradually learn how to correct and improve their writing.

A scheduled daily free writing period is the keystone of the program. Students are expected from the first class meeting to take pen or pencil in hand and write. In the beginning, the writing period is relatively short (about five minutes in length), but it is

gradually lengthened to about twenty minutes. The following is a detailed description of the writing program.

Getting Started

The students are directed to obtain a spiral bound notebook for use exclusively during the daily writing period. Before the students begin writing on the first day, they are told a few basic rules:

1. They must enter the day's date in the left margin each time they begin writing.
2. They may write about anything they want to as long as:
   a. It does not ridicule or degrade anyone.
   b. It does not contain unacceptable four letter words.
   c. It does not contain anything of a sexually suggestive nature.
3. If, after given a suggested topic, they cannot think of anything to write, they must write, "My name is _____" over and over again until they do think of something to write.
4. They will give the notebooks to the teacher at the end of each writing period.

The students are then given a suggested writing topic, told they may write about it or anything else they would like to write about, and put to work writing for an uninterrupted period of five minutes. During this time the teacher may do one of two things: circulate and observe, or sit down and write something her/himself. The students are encouraged to write. They are not pressed as to the grammatical, spelling, and other mechanical correctness of their writing. They are encouraged to do their best in these matters, but

they are not to dwell on them, i.e. they do not have to get a dictionary to check the spellings of words at this point. When the five minutes have passed, the notebooks are collected.

During the first few days, the teacher need not do much with the notebooks. S/he should review them to see that the dates are being recorded in the left margin daily and that the students are writing something. The teacher need not correct anything at this point. If, however, s/he wants to review the material in detail, s/he may do so, but no comments other than positive comments should be written in the notebooks.

The length of time that the students write is gradually increased over the first five weeks of the school year from the initial five minute period each day, to a twenty minute period.

In the third week of the year the students are given a list of proofreading symbols. (Appendix A) They use these proofreading symbols for three purposes:

1. They are taught how to use them so that they are able to proofread other students' writing.
2. They are required to use them in a daily proofreading activity done on the chalkboard (which will be discussed later).
3. They receive papers they have written which the teacher has proofread and corrected using the symbols.

The teacher does not proofread everything the students have written each day. Rather, the teacher proofreads approximately one-fifth of the written material each day so that each student in the class is reviewed once each week. This usually amounts to reviewing

five or six students' papers per day and the total process takes about 18 minutes of the teacher's time. Also, the teacher may review students' writing during the daily writing activity. While the teacher walks among the students, s/he is able to correct and suggest as the need arises. S/he can also point out things that s/he noted during the review and explain and/or amplify as necessary.

When the teacher reviews one-fifth of the material each day, s/he is able to see how the students are progressing. Also, the teacher is able to determine if a large segment of the class is having difficulty with one specific area of writing. While one student's problems can be handled individually during the daily writing period, the problems affecting a large segment of the class seem to be handled best by instruction with the entire class participating. Class participation is better and the learning rate is higher because the teacher and students can easily relate the lesson to some writing on which they have recently worked. For example, early in the year many students try to use quotation marks because the types of story starters used lend themselves to writing dialogue. Even though they have previously been taught how to use quotation marks, they usually are not successful in using them in their first daily writing efforts. The problem is often widespread enough to justify a total class lesson, and the lesson means more to the students because they have been struggling recently with just that problem. Not everyone's difficulties are eliminated, but monitoring and instruction by the teacher during the daily writing helps reduce the number of students having difficulties.

Writing Topics

Intermediate level elementary school students seem to enjoy writing about humorous topics. As a result, the great majority of topics which are suggested to them are of this type.

There are four main methods which are used to provide topics for student writing: potpourri, purchased kits, student suggestions, and comic cutouts. These methods in and of themselves often produce a humorous topic.

Potpourri consists of three lists of fifty items each which are numbered from one to fifty. The first list contains strange, funny, and interesting people; the second contains events/actions; the third contains locations/settings. (These three lists cover the three elements of fictional writing: characters, plot, and setting.) Three students are asked for a number from one to fifty. The three numbers provide one item from each of the three lists. The three items are listed on the chalkboard together with the day's date. For example, a student may have selected number 38 from list 1, number 37 from list 2, and 6 from list 3 resulting in the topic: Frankenstein left footprints in a litter box. See Appendix B for a copy of one set of lists.

Publishers produce various types of writing starters. One publisher, Educational Insights, Inc. (423 South Hindry Avenue, Inglewood, California 90301), produces index card-sized kits entitled "Write On!" and "More Write On!" These kits consist of many cards which give an illustration, describe a situation including a title, and list several hypothetical questions relative to the

situation. The teacher writes the title on the board, reads the description and the questions, and allows the students to put all of the elements together and begin writing.

Students are great sources of ideas, and they take pride in having their suggestions used. Students have helped to add to the potpourri lists. Students have also suggested titles as topics. Appendix C is a partial list of student-suggested topics.

The comic papers from the Sunday newspaper can be a fine source of writing ideas. Removal of the words from the speaker's balloons allows duplication of the entire strip without the words. Students learn to be economical with words and ideas in order to entirely cover a situation in a dozen or less sentences.

Proofreading

After the students have been involved in their daily writing for several weeks, they are given a copy of the proofreading symbols previously mentioned. The teacher explains the meaning and use of the symbols. Several times each week, immediately after distribution of these symbols, sentences without punctuation, capitalization, with grammatical and spelling errors, etc. are printed on the chalkboard. Students are asked to gather at the board with their proofreading lists, and various students are selected to correct the sentences using the proofreading symbols. When the students indicate they are finished, the teacher, if necessary elicits changes from the remainder of the group and discusses the changes. This activity is scheduled twice each week.

When the students have gained some proficiency in their use of

the proofreading symbols, they are directed, after a daily writing period, to take one section of their own writing and proofread it. While they are working, the teacher should circulate and give aid and encouragement. This process is repeated during several subsequent writing periods.

Finally, when the majority of students is comfortable with the task, they are directed to proofread another student's writing. When the proofreading is finished, the two students review the changes which have been made and discuss them. Again the teacher should circulate during this entire time and aid, encourage, and arbitrate if necessary. The proofreading activity continues at this level for the entire school year.

Spelling

Spelling dictation is a very important aspect of the program. Each week the teacher selects approximately 15 words, preferably of high utility, which the students are to learn. The words could conceivably come from any source. They may come from a standard spelling book. Another very good source is the student's daily writing. Obviously, if a student has a word in her/his writing vocabulary and misspells it, it would be a good choice for a spelling list. Also, some students have learned incorrect spellings for minor or easy words which would not normally be included in a spelling list at a given grade level. The teacher can note these errors during the daily review of the daily writing and gradually include them in sentences of her/his own or make them a required part of a sentence. The teacher then directs all students to compose

sentences which include the words. Some requirements are established. For example, the students may be directed to write one sentence which uses a question mark. Or they may be directed to write one which has a proper noun in it.

When the students finish, the teacher gathers the papers and selects a sufficient number of sentences to cover the words which were assigned. These sentences are duplicated, and the copies are distributed to the students. The duplicated copies become their spelling lists for the week, and the teacher dictates the sentences in place of the traditional fifteen to twenty word test.

Dictation of sentences as a test teaches the student several things:

- When a student has to write in sentences, he begins to think in sentences.
- It requires that a student learn/relearn words that s/he should have learned in previous years.
- It disciplines a student's mind.

Dictation provides the teacher many teaching opportunities. Punctuation, contractions, capitalization, abbreviations, alliteration, etc. can be taught using this method.

When the students are about four weeks into the program, the teacher suggests a topic and directs them to write about it or any topic they select. This, instead of being written in the notebook, is written on composition paper; it is given to the teacher who evaluates it, assigns a letter grade, and returns it to the student. This activity is repeated once every four weeks. Every other time,

instead of composing, the students are directed to proofread and rewrite something they have previously written in their notebooks.

Periodically, the students are asked to read one of their compositions to the other students. Most often this is done on a voluntary basis. Reading something that s/he has written gives the student a better reason for writing than merely to fulfill the assignment requirements. When a student reads some writing s/he has written, s/he has an empathic audience. The great majority of times that a student reads personally written material, the response is favorable, and the favorable response encourages the student to write more and try new things. Also, reading orally causes the student to stop and look critically at her/his product and see some of its good as well as its weak points.

The chart on the next page summarizes the most important strategies of the writing program.

WRITING PROGRAM

Week number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Daily writing time period	5 minutes	8 minutes	10 minutes	15 minutes	20 minutes continuous for balance of term		
Proofreading			Introduce symbols	Chalkboard activities	Students proofread their own writing	Students proofread another student's writing	Continue with week four, five and six activities
Spelling	Dictate 15 sentences. Levy requirements for capitalization, punctuation, usage, etc.						
Other	The teacher circulates during the daily writing period and monitors the students' progress. The teacher requires a written composition done in class every other fourth week and a proofread, rewritten composition the alternating fourth week. The teacher should review one-fifth of the students' notebooks each school day.						

SECTION III

EVALUATION AND RESULTS

Since the objective of this project was to determine if certain strategies to teach writing would result in increased learning of writing skills, a quasi-experimental-control design was used. Seven classes of students (three experimental and four control) in Northeastern Wisconsin were administered writing pretests in the fall and posttests in the spring. The teachers of the experimental groups were trained to use the strategies of the writing program previously described. They used these strategies in teaching their students during the period between the pretest and posttest. The students in the control groups were taught using "traditional" methods. Each student's test was scored by two raters using the holistic method and the data was processed by computer. The sections that follow detail choice of subjects, training the teachers of the experimental groups, instruments used and test administration, rating procedures, and the statistical analysis and results.

The Subjects

A quasi-experimental-control design was used to evaluate the effectiveness of the writing program. The experimental and the control groups were made up of sixth grade students. The three experimental groups consisted of one classroom each at Luxemburg-Casco Elementary School, Luxemburg, Wisconsin; St. Mary's School,

Luxemburg, Wisconsin; and Wequiock Elementary School, near Green Bay, Wisconsin. The experimental groups totaled eighty-five students. Control groups were established at Holy Cross Elementary School, Bay Settlement, Wisconsin; St. Louis Elementary School, Dyckesville, Wisconsin; Southern Door Elementary School, Brussels, Wisconsin; and Sturgeon Bay Junior High School, Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin. The control groups totaled seventy-two students.

These schools were selected to represent a cross-section of the students in the local geographical area. Luxemburg-Casco Elementary School has a mostly rural student body as does Southern Door Elementary School; St. Mary's in Luxemburg is a Catholic school with a student body roughly equivalent to the Catholic schools at Bay Settlement and Dyckesville; Wequiock School serves part of Green Bay, Wisconsin, a major metropolitan area, and the Sturgeon Bay Junior High serves a small metropolitan area.

Training the Teachers of the Experimental Groups

This writer was the teacher of one experimental group. The teachers of the other two experimental groups received instruction from the writer. These teachers were trained in the strategies of the writing program and included in the experimental group for the purpose of controlling for teacher effect - an important variable in this type of study. This aspect of the design was implemented to insure that the program's results would be valid independent of the teacher using it.

The cooperating teachers spent several hours with the writer learning about topic selection, proofreading techniques and symbols, spelling dictation, the evaluative procedures they would use for

their students' work, and the gradualism involved with implementing daily writing. Also, they were provided a series of suggested topics and an outline of the program.

The teachers of the experimental groups were encouraged to contact the writer about any aspect of the program. Also, the writer contacted them twice during the course of the project to determine if there were problems and to insure that the teachers had implemented and were following the elements of the program.

The Instruments and Test Administration

All classes were administered a writing pretest in the fall of 1978. The writing pretest was a free writing activity. The test booklet, Form JS produced by the Psychological Corporation, which is a part of the Metropolitan Achievement Test, showed a picture that would appeal to school children together with a simple explanation. The students were instructed to look at the picture and then, using the picture and explanation as a basis, write for twenty minutes. The teachers were directed not to give help with anything other than the directions. Other instructions are shown in Appendix D.

All classes were administered a posttest in the spring of 1979. A different form of the writing portion of the Metropolitan Achievement Test was used, Form KS. The instructions and methods were the same as for the pretest.

Rating Procedures

Each student's pretest and posttest was evaluated by two trained, professional raters. The raters used the holistic scoring method. In holistic scoring, the rater reacts to a piece of writing in toto and compares it to a standard to determine how a student's

writing compares to a group's writing. The standard has been established by selecting sample papers which are typical from eight categories - 1 (lowest quality) to 8 (highest quality) - and then having the raters study the samples. Using this method, trained raters consistently achieve inter-rater reliability correlations above .80. In this study, the two ratings for each test were summed. Then the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (1975) was used to analyze the data.

Statistical Analysis and Results

Using the Statistical Package, means and standard deviations of scores were computed for the summed pretest and posttest scores. These data are summarized in Table I.

TABLE I

Means and Standard Deviations of Holistic Scores, Pretesting and Posttesting, for Experimental (N=85) and Control (N=72) Groups

	Pretest		Posttest	
Group	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD
Treatment	8.40	2.38	9.91	2.52
Control	9.01	2.47	9.63	2.44

Examination of Table I indicates the following:

1. The difference of the averaged summed scores for the treatment group was +1.51.
2. The difference of the averaged summed scores for the control group was +.62.
3. The treatment group's average pretest score was lower and

average posttest score was higher than the control group's.

4. Students in the control and treatment groups were reasonably equivalent in their ability to write as indicated by the pretest.

Table II shows the test of significance of differences in the gain scores between the experimental and control groups.

TABLE II

Test of Significance of Difference in Gain Scores Between Experimental and Control Groups

	Treatment	Control	t	p
Mean Gain Score	+1.5	+.62		
Standard Deviation	2.50	1.77	2.62	.01
Standard Error	.27	.21		

These data indicate that while both groups showed gains in writing scores from the beginning to the end of the school year, the treatment group, as hypothesized, showed significantly more gain than did the control group. Hence, these results tend to confirm the effectiveness or value of the writing program investigated in this study.

Table III shows the correlation among the raters. Results of scoring the pretests and posttests clearly show that reliable scoring had been achieved by the raters.

TABLE III

Correlations among Raters

Test	Group	Correlation Coefficient
Pretest	Control	.85
Posttest	Control	.81
Pretest	Experimental	.81
Posttest	Experimental	.81

In addition to the statistical data, the students' writings themselves tend to indicate that there were major shifts in the ability to write. To illustrate this, some examples follow of student writing early in a school year and writing from the same student later in the year. These examples were not taken from pretests or posttests.

October 10 Fifteen Minutes Only!

I'ts really a pretty nice life living here seeing all those new people and new and old cars, except in the winter it get's cold and my paint starts cracking. My favorite car is Joe G. Kruse he drives a 1977 Mercury, Cougar and almost all ways parks here and I cheat a little on his fifteen minutes. Every morning the mailman, postman all say "hi". (End)

April 5

"We have a baseball team here right?" said the coach.
"Right!" shouted the team.
"And were going to play like a baseball team right?" shouted the coach.
"Right" the team hollered.
"Then why do you play like a bunch of old ladies on roller skates?" yelled the coach.

(This story continued for two additional handwritten pages.)

September 8 The Creepy Cave

Me and my friend were in the sandy wet cave. Our flashlight went out, and all of a sudden big, black bat's chase us. We were running and we diddent know where we were going, because it was dark. (End)

March 23 Vanishing Teacher

It was a sunny day and boring day again for Charlie. Every school-day to him was a rotten one. School began. Charlie sat in his desk, waiting for his teacher to walk in.

Mrs. Smoothberry walked in. She sat down at her desk. Charlie slumped low in his chair watching Mrs. Smoothberry. Mrs. Smoothberry sneesed very hard "Haaaaa Choooo!" Charlie said outloud "Where did she go?" "What's wrong children?" Charlie said "Who's that?"

"It's me, your teacher" she was

(The story stopped here and a new one was begun the next day.)

August 28

This summer we went to Great America. We went on the Log Ride, Boat Ride, and the Cable Cars. We went to see the Dolphin Show, Music America show, and the show called To Fly.

We also went on vacation upnorth, to our cabin. We were there 9 days and went swimming 11 times. We went to see 12 foot falls and other very beautiful places. We went fishing and my brother caught a fish. We took a ride and saw some log cabins being built. We also went out to eat a couple of times and we went shopping in the nearby town. When we went to the beach we saw a crab and we also saw some snails. I had fun swimming and I learned how to stand on my head underwater.

It was a very fun vacation!

March 26 Why Did it Have to Happen to me?

"Mom, I just can't move. I can't leave everything I have here," I sa[illegible] crying. Mom and Dad were getting a divorce and I had to live with mom. She was planning on moving away from Florida and moving to California. I was going out with Steve Jenson. When I was out of school which is in 2 months, we were going to get married, but we still didn't tell our parents.

"Why can't we move?" Mom said, "I want get as far away from your father as possible."

"But Mom . . . you just don't understand," Steve and I haven't told you this yet but we're planning on getting married in two months when I'm out of school," I said.

"Jessie you don't know what you're getting into," Mom said.

"Mom, what am I suppose to do? Drop my love for Steve because your marriage didn't work out. Mom if I can't stay here with Steve, well I'll just run away. Mom I love him," I said.

"I don't care what you say you're not old enough to decide if you should get married or not," Mom said. I started walking upstairs suddenly I said, "I meant what I said I'll run away to be with him."

August 28 — My Rabbits

On our farm, I raise rabbits. I have all different colors of rabbits. I have orange, black & white, white, orand and white, black, brown and white, and siamese rabbits I have over 25 rabbits. I sell them to a man that butchers rabbits and sells them to the stores. They eat alot, they eat, hay, grass, corn, pellets, cabbage, apples, celery, carrots and carrot tops, and oats.

Rabbits are very good pets and they are quite. Right now I have 15 little baby rabbits.

May 14 — The Homeless Kitten

It all started one morning. I got out of bed, walked downstairs and opened the front door to get the milk. When I got to the front door I discovered the the milk bottle had been knocked over. The funny thing about it was there wasn' even a drop of milk left.

I started to get suspicious. So I got dressed and went outside to look around. I looked in the bushes and up in the trees, but I couldn't find anything. I started to walk back to the house when I heard something that sounded like a cat. I looked under the porch and there it was a little calico kitten.

I took her into the house and fed her some Fish Ahoy cat food with some milk. I named her Tiffaney.

A week or so later Tiffaney got hit by a car. I really liked that cat but I can live without her.

August 28 — Our Animals

We have about 220 pigs. 11 of the pigs have babies. My dad ships out about 5 or 6 40-pounders every Wed. My brother is going to take 5 pigs to the Livestock show. We have mostly sows, but we have 3 bors, a couple barrows which are still littel. We have pretty many babies, too.

In our barn my brother also has chickens. He has four hens & a rooster.

One of the hens lays eggs now.

May 15

Gymnastics

Gymnastics is one of my favorite sports.

I like this sport because it keeps you in shape, and keeping in shape means being healthier and more active. It even just plain old, makes you happier and more polite.

I also like this sport because it's fun. It really makes you a whole new, better human being.

This summer I am going to go to some gymnastics classes. Some of my friends and people I know are going, too. Their names are Sue Bouche, Carolyn Berceau, Cari DeMoulin, and Ami Kelly.

In gymnastics you do lots of things. For instance, you go one trampoline, the even and uneven parallel bars, you do flips, tumbling, and lots and lots of other things I just don't have time to write down.

Another reason gymnastics is fun is because you get to compete against other kids from different gymnastic classes. If you get to be a super excellent, gymnastic competitor you might even get to be on T.V. while you're doing your stuff, and there's a chance of that for everybody.

Our school, L-C Elementary, is sponsering this gymnastic class I'm going to. They said They'll give us transportaion if needed.

We all got a sheet of paper telling a little about this. Then, if you're interested, you would have to call one of the lady's numbers on the sheet.

My mom called me in. They said it would cost eighteen dollars. They also said we would have it 2 times a week for 5 weeks, which equals ten days. The days we'll be going on is going to be Tuesdays and Thursdays. Another thing they said was that it would start on June 21 or July 21. I can't quite remember.

August [illegible]

The Doggy Blahs

Rover has the doggy blahs, which are probly caused by not having any friends, said Mr. Cane the vet at the Canine Clinic. No -no the doggy blahs are caused by having to many fleas on his body and blllllling rang the dinner bell just as Miss Leperlang was going to conclued something. Miss Carson feed Rover please.

Miss Carson was the nurse at the Canine Clinic her job was to feed the animals. O.K. Rover its time for um - um. Do I put this in there or not well here. Then all of the sudden Rover didn't have the doggy blahs any more because the stuff Miss Carson put in the dish cured him.

May 14

The Homeless Skunk

One day as I was passing Mr. Furry's Pet Store, I noticed that there was a skunk in the pen by the big window and there was a sign that said FOR SALE.

I thought he would be perfact fo my zoo.

I already had a dog, cat, turtle, snake, owl, bird, gopher, tree frog, fish and some very tiny bugs, oops I almost forgot a mouse.

The zoo is in the back of our house in a big, shed. People were invited to come and see them.

I ran home as quick as I could to ask my parents if I could get him to add to the zoo. When I got home and asked them they said no!

"But why?" I asked.

"Because he could spray you or the other animals in the face."

I didn't say anything else.

The next day after school I stopped to look at the Skunk then I walked in.

"Mr. Furry does that skunk spray?"

"No, before we got him the man said for some reason he can't."

"Okay. Thank - you."

Right away when I got home I told my parents that he couldn't spray for some reason.

"Well, then I suppose. How much?" my Dad asked.

I told him the price and took my bike to the Pet Store.

"Mr. Furry, Mr. Furry I came to buy the skunk."

August 28 Our Trip To Minnesota

Friday night we will leave after chores. We will try to get as far as we can. Saturday, morning we will start as early as we can. We will be going to the Minnesota state fair until 6:00 After the fair we will go to a hotel. Sunday, we will start early and go to Valley Fair, a big amusement park. Monday, we will go shopping in Minneapolis. Tuesday we will go to our dads appointment and come home.

May 14 Cruisin'

Here I am with my Turbo Trans Am. It's Friday night, no school tomorrow. Full tank of gas.

This is my night to cruise!

I start the car and pull out of the driveway. Squeeeeeeeeeeeek. I lay a patch on the cement in front of my house.

I think I'll go down to the Strip, a three mile long stretch of road with drive in's, liquor stores, drugstores, and soda fountains, where every weekend thousands of teenagers hang out.

I think I'll see how many drag races I can get into.

I drove up to a stupid looking kid in a stupid looking, souped up Corvette.

"Come on, you turkey," I hollered, "Let's see who has the fastest car."

And the stupid looking kid hollered back, "Well you better be ready to eat my dust."

We pulled even, "To the end of the strip," I hollered.

"Go," he hollered back.

I started out in first, he had the jump on me so I shifted to second, I was gaining ground so I shifted to third, I was even with him now, so I shifted to fourth and pulled ahead. Then I put the pedal to the metal and let her roll.

SECTION IV

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

This study leads to several conclusions about important issues dealing with improving students' writing skills. They are:

- Students' composition skills are affected by the type of instructional program to which they are exposed.
- The balanced writing program detailed in this paper has a significant and favorable effect on students' composition skills.
- A balanced approach including dictation, free writing, proofreading, etc. seems to be important.

The success of this program seems to be the collective result of these factors:

- Increased time on task which is the result of the daily writing period
- Peer evaluation
- Proofreading, revision, and rewriting
- The discipline of spelling dictation
- Peer appreciation through oral reading of student compositions
- Teacher modeling

Several of these factors strike directly at the heart of the three causes of the problem listed in Section I of this paper. If teachers lack training in the techniques of teaching writing, there is no more

effective, rapid way to get her/him involved with students' writing and writing with students than through a program like this one. When a teacher writes with students, in addition to the benefits the students derive from having a role model, the teacher struggles with the composing process and learns what composing really is. Gradually students and teacher start taking dictionaries off the shelf to use them because they need to use them, not because they are forced to do so. Gradually the teacher and students begin discussing problems they are encountering from a common viewpoint.

Time on task is very important in learning anything. People learn by persevering. By requiring that students write daily for an extended period, teachers can greatly increase student time on the task of writing. With reading predominant in U. S. elementary schools, writing has suffered. If writing is placed on an equal footing with reading, this writer believes both writing and reading will benefit.

But one must not misinterpret and merely increase the time spent teaching grammar. Teaching grammar does not teach writing. If one intends to teach grammar, do it; if one intends to teach writing, do not teach grammar. Use the time to have students write.

It is important to reemphasize that a combination of these factors was found to be effective. This study did not determine which, if any, is more important than the others. This writer believes that all of these factors are important and essential to the program's success. However, it must be left to future research to determine the importance of each of the component factors.

The interrelationships of the writing program and Lyman Hunt's

Sustained Silent Reading (S.S.R.) could be another topic for future research. This technique is one which the writer has used in the classroom since before the time of the study. This writer believes strongly that S.S.R. develops both reading and writing skills. Some students use the material they are reading as a model for their writing. Also, the material which they read gives them a larger storehouse of knowledge for their writing and increases their writing fluency.

Other favorable considerations are:

- The program does not significantly increase the teacher's instructional budget. If costs are of paramount consideration, the teacher who would want to institute this program could do so without spending any budget money other than purchasing a few reams of theme paper. If funding is not so critical, the teacher could purchase some commercially prepared story starters as well as provide the spiral notebook for daily writing. Justification for purchasing and providing the notebook could be based on elimination of the spelling book.

- The program does not require additional class time. It can easily fit into the normal amount of time allotted to spelling and language. If someone were looking to devote the minimum amount of time to the program, 45 minutes per day would suffice assuming the program was past week four and spelling dictation was scheduled four days per week.

- The program does not affect the organization of the school day. As mentioned above, this program can fit into the normal spelling and language periods, so it does not affect school day organization

from this perspective. Also, it can be used with virtually any type of student grouping. This writer has used most elements of the program with students who were ability grouped as well as with those who were not.

- The program does not require extensive teacher training to initiate. This writer briefed the cooperating experimental group teachers on the elements of the program in a few hours. Subsequently, he contacted the teachers via telephone to determine if problems had arisen.

If the teacher implementing this program gets involved in writing, s/he will find that s/he learns a great deal about the writing process. This, for the most part, should be self learning as well as learning through discussion with colleagues.

- The program does not necessarily increase teacher time spent on correcting and grading language and spelling. Depending on the circumstances, it in fact may decrease teacher correcting time. Assuming a class of thirty students, we can estimate some teacher's work requirements for the program after week four. A student will write an average of less than one page during the daily writing period. That will mean, on a daily basis, that the teacher should read approximately six pages per day at roughly three minutes per page which totals eighteen minutes of the teacher's work time. Evaluation of thirty compositions each four weeks on a holistic basis should require 150 minutes assuming 5 minutes per paper. During the week when this evaluation occurs, the teacher need not review the daily writing. As a result the net increase in work time for the week is 60 minutes in this area.

Using the procedure outlined above would conceivably replace correcting, grading and recording thirty papers per day for each of the five days if the teacher used a typical language textbook. Using two minutes per paper for correcting, grading, and recording, the total weekly teacher work time requirement is 300 minutes. Stated another way, using a four week cycle of the writing program should require about 420 minutes of out-of-class teacher proofreading, evaluation, and recording time; the traditional textbook method would require 1200 minutes for the same time period. These are estimates. The potential work time saving may vary based on local conditions.

Virtually all the spelling dictation work is done in class. This writer has organized the process so that he checks student reviewed tests for accuracy. Using two minutes as the review time required for each test, the total work time requirement per week is 60 minutes.

APPENDICES

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APPENDIX A

Proofreading Symbols

Writing that is corrected with pencil or with pen is called rough draft. Some common marks that proofreaders use for correcting writing are shown below. Study the marks so that when they appear on your papers you know what they mean. Also, be prepared to use these symbols when you proofread other students' papers.

sp	check the spelling
⊙	insert a period
^	insert a letter, punctuation mark, etc.
#	add space
¶	start a new paragraph
no ¶	should not have started a new paragraph
———	underline
⊏	move left
⊐	move right
l.c.	use a lower case (small) letter
cap	use a capital letter
?	is this correct?
∨	insert quotes, etc.
⌒	close up
⌒	delete
S	transpose
frag.	a fragment - not a complete sentance

List 1: People

1. Batman
2. Dog detective
3. Skylock Hoomes
4. Clarabelle the Clown
5. Chief Fatty Pants
6. Tommy the Toothless Tiger
7. The Mysterious Monster Man
8. Big Green Frog
9. King Kong
10. Big Foot
11. The Loch Ness Monster
12. Elmer the Elephant
13. Yeti
14. Delores Dinosaur
15. $6 million man
16. Count Dracula
17. Mickey Mouse
18. Bashful Bessie
19. Arnold the Astronaut
20. The Blob
21. The Crusher
22. The Creature From the Black Lagoon
23. Godzilla
24. Megalon
25. Little Red Riding Hood
26. The Snow Monster
27. Uncle Sam
28. Igor
29. Witchdoctor
30. Frank the Fish
31. Wolf Man Jack
32. Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde
33. Lightfingers Louie
34. Santa Claus
35. Talking Monkey
36. Crane Operator
37. Farmer
38. Frankenstein
39. Peter Cotton Tail
40. Bugs Bunny
41. Charlie Brown
42. Snoopy
43. Encyclopedia Brown
44. Mad Scientist
45. Lonesome Cowboy
46. Football Hero
47. President Jimmy Peanuts
48. B.C.
49. Musclesman
50. The Abominable Milkman

APPENDIX B

List 2: Events

1. Buried people
2. Exhumed people
3. Robbed a bank
4. Made friends with Martians
5. In a snowmobile race
6. Jumped in a river
7. Ran away
8. Was kissed
9. Was strangled
10. Built a snow fort
11. Rode a minibike
12. Robbed a train
13. Went to bed
14. Ate people
15. Killed himself
16. Jumped off a cliff
17. Swam the Pacific
18. Met headhunters
19. Bought a horse
20. Went to California
21. Jumped in a lake
22. Ate a raw egg
23. Caught a whale
24. Stuck in an elevator
25. Could see at night
26. Didn't study
27. Couldn't stop eating
28. Cried and cried
29. Laughed and laughed
30. Discovered gold
31. Invented Valentines
32. Played baseball
33. Chewed a mousehole
34. Swallowed a rock
35. Ate snakes
36. Wrecked steam locomotives
37. Left footprints
38. Changed to a wolf
39. Came from Jupiter
40. Visited a king
41. Had a facelift
42. Heard a scary noise
43. Had a heart attack
44. Lost his pants
45. Fell in the soup
46. Saw U.F.O.'s
47. Met a giant mouse
48. Met Frankenstein
49. Met the Purple People Eaters
50. Caught a skunk

APPENDIX B

List 3: Location

1. Uncivilized island
2. England 1876
3. Astec Temple
4. School in 2018
5. Dancing with the Fons
6. In a litter box
7. An underground tunnel
8. A drugstore in 1940
9. On the moon
10. In a school desk
11. Dallas, Texas
12. Mysterious island in 50,000 B.C.
13. In a horse stable
14. In a bathroom
15. Mexico, 1495
16. In the sky
17. In a closet
18. Under the kitchen table
19. Las Vegas
20. On Pluto
21. In the White House
22. In a garbage can
23. In the slammer
24. In Alaska
25. At the Mickey Mouse Factory
26. South Pole
27. China
28. Mars
29. Apeville
30. Rock Candy Mountains
31. At the ceiling
32. In the principal's office
33. In a zoo cage
34. At the center of the earth
35. At Frog Station
36. In the gym
37. At Lombardi Field
38. At the roller skating rink
39. In the hospital
40. In a junkyard
41. Count Dracula's Castle
42. A desert isle
43. Lost in space
44. Inside a T.V. set
45. Inside an airplane
46. At a baseball game
47. In a snake pit
48. In a desk drawer
49. Inside the pencil sharpener
50. In my desk

Titles Suggested by Students

Footsteps in the Night

In the Barnyard

How Was Frankenstein Made?

Luscious Lizards for Lunch

I'm Mad!

The First Day of Christmas

Christmas Mouse

Santa's Reindeer

How Santa Got Fat

Christmas Is . . .

Christmas Moose

Blue Christmas

Santa's Last Christmas

Christmas Cow

Christmas Pickle

Merry Krismoose

Who's Chasing Me?

"Dear Worm . . . "

My Horse Dumbhead

Grow People-Eating Plants for Fun and Profit

The Creature from the Black Lagoon

Skateboarding on Breakneck Hill

No Place To Go At Christmas

The Most Beautiful Witch in the World

All Alone and Blue at Christmas

The Mysterious House on the Hill

The House that Had a Heart Attack

Moldylocks and the Three Pigs

Frankenstein's Beauty Shop

Dracula's Blood Bank

The Mouse That Saved Christmas

Outer Space Robot

Rudolph's Shiny Christmas

Santa in a Submarine

Dracula Comes to Life

The Dog That Went to School

Should People Smoke?

Baby Frankenstein

My Life As A _____

What Happened When I Went Snooping for My Christmas Presents

APPENDIX D

Date: November

From: Jon Wienke

Subject: Control group testing - writing project

To:

About the project:

This writing project is designed to find out if a special course of instruction can favorably affect student achievement in writing. I believe that the results will be helpful to teachers who want to develop students' writing skills.

What to do:

Your part of this project is very simple. You are being asked to administer two free writing tests to the students in your class. The test involves writing a story about a picture. I have included enough writing test booklets for the first test. Please administer it as soon as possible. I will send you another set of test booklets sometime in the spring and have you administer the test again.

To administer the test, please follow the steps below.

1. Tell students they are going to be asked to write a story.
2. Pass out booklets for the exercise to the students.
3. Have students fill in the identifying information on the cover.
4. When all students have completed the identifying information, have students turn to the inside of the booklet. Read the directions below the picture to the students.
5. Have students go right ahead and work.
6. Give no further help. If students ask about particular forms, styles, etc. to use, simply tell them to write the way they think it should be done.
7. It is unlikely that any student will need more space than is provided on the booklet. However, if a student asks for additional paper, you may provide it. (See that the additional paper or booklet is clipped or stapled to the first booklet when materials are collected.)
8. If there are students in the class who often use a language other than English, tell them to write in English for this project.
9. Allow a total of 20 minutes for writing the story. If all students in the class are finished before time is called, simply go ahead and collect the papers.
10. When finished, place all materials, used and unused, in the enclosed envelope and return it to me.

Thanks for your help.

Sincerely,

Jon Wienke

NOTES

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[11]"Help! Teacher Can't Teach!" Time, 115 (June 16, 1980), p. 57.

[12]Timothy Shanahan, "The Writing Crisis: A Survey and a Solution," Phi Delta Kappan, 61 (Nov. 1979), p. 216.

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[14]Shanahan, loc. cit.

[15]Johnson, loc. cit.

[16]Janice Neuleib, "What to Tell Writing Teachers to Teach," NASSP Bulletin, 61 (Oct. 1977), p. 94.

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[18]Frank Heys, "The Theme-a-Week Assumption: A Report of an Experiment," English Journal, 51 (May 1962), pp. 320, 322.

[19]Lois V. Arnold, "Writer's Cramp and Eyestrain - Are They Paying Off?" English Journal, 53 (Jan. 1964), p. 14.

[20]Johnson, loc. cit.

[21]Graves, Balance the Basics, pp. 14-15.

[22]Emig, loc. cit.

[23]Graves, Balance the Basics, p. 16.

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